

GOP seeks more aid for local governments

By GEOFFREY TAYLOR

ALBANY (AP) — Senate Republicans proposed legislation yesterday that would help local governments get more federal community development aid and limit state-siphoned administrative costs.

The chairman of the Senate Committee on Housing and Community Development, John Daly, R-Niagara, said the GOP-controlled house was backing a proposal to have local governments share \$39 million in the federal Small Cities Community Development Block program without the state taking a cut of nearly \$1 million in administrative costs.

Communities have used the aid in the past to help rehabilitate deteriorating downtown sections of cities through the use of local grants and low-interest loans.

"Our legislation," Daly said, "would eventually put local governments in a position to determine the future administration of (the federal block grant) funds, thus fulfilling our commitment to have local communities determine their own future in the program."

Senate Majority Leader Warren Anderson, R-Binghamton, had earlier rejected Gov. Mario M. Cuomo's proposed state takeover of the federal program. Such a takeover, Daly said, would have meant a loss of nearly \$1 million in grants to pay for state administrative costs.

Such a shift in administration of the program to the state, Daly said, also would mean substantial delays in aid payments to communities and disruption of local programs.

Some Senate Republicans also

The Legislature

were concerned that state control of the program would enable Secretary of State Gail Shaffer, a Democrat, to gain free publicity through announcements of grants to local governments. Shaffer is considered a potential running mate for Cuomo if Lt. Gov. Alfred DelBello does not run for reelection.

Daly proposed to have the federal government retain some of the administrative duties and have the state provide some technical assistance to the state's smaller cities that lack the expertise of putting together competitive grant applications.

Under the terms of the bill, a state appropriation of \$200,000 also would be made to help provide technical assistance. Participating local governments would be required to match it in the form of money or in-kind services. In addition, the federal government also has been providing the state with about \$200,000 for administration costs.

The bill also would create a Temporary state Commission on Community Development that would make recommendations on how the state can help small cities get the most federal aid from the block grant program.

Cuomo and Assembly Housing Committee Chairman Alexander Grannis, D-Manhattan, had no comment on the Republican proposal.

Also yesterday:

MENTALLY RETARDED

The Assembly approved and sent to the Senate a measure aimed at establishing a "bill of rights" for the mentally retarded in community facilities.

Sponsored by Mental Health Committee Chairwoman Elizabeth A. Connelly, D-West Brighton, the measure faced no opposition yesterday.

"It is the intention of this bill to ensure that individuals residing in community facilities are provided an atmosphere that assures each individual a life of dignity," states a memo in favor of the legislation.

UTILITY THEFT

Utilities, such as New York Telephone Co. or Niagara Mohawk, will be able to sue for punitive damages when they catch someone who steals phone or electric services under the provisions of a bill that won final legislative approval in the Assembly.

If a homeowner rigged an electric meter box to register less power than he actually consumed, the utility now can prosecute the homeowner and sue for the actual amount of power used. If the bill becomes law, the utility would be allowed to sue for more money than it actually lost. It now goes to Cuomo.

FISH CARCASSES

It would be illegal to discard fish carcasses into state waterways and shorelines under the terms of a bill given final legislative approval by the Assembly and sent to Cuomo.

Proponents of the measure say upstate fishing areas have been affected by a few who spear fish and dispose of the carcasses in lakes and streams.